4: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FL11 Luo FL11

Their huts are very similar to those of the Bantu Kavirondo, but they are a trifle lower, and are generally built solely of reeds (*mabua*). The huts are dug out inside to a depth of 18 inches or 2 feet; the hut is plastered with the earth dug out from the interior. 342

There are two fire-places in each hut, and the customs previously enumerated about stopping at the first or second cooking place are the same as among the Bantu Kavirondo. 354

Young girls sleep in a hut with the other girls of the village in the care of an old woman. The boys of the village sleep in a hut by themselves. The villages are roughly circular. The huts are not arranged in any particular order, but the huts of one man are generally side by side. The huts of the young men are usually near the gates, and they are supposed to watch the gates in case of any attempt being made to steal the cattle. 513 361 883

On entering a village the hut directly opposite the gate is generally the hut of the principal wife of the headman of the village, or the headman of that part of the village. 361

Food products.—Mtama, sweet potatoes, a little *wimbi*, Indian corn, and also pumpkins, semsem, and pulse (*pojo*). Bananas are occasionally grown, but they do not flourish, as the country is a little too dry for them. A little tobacco and Indian hemp are grown. The Indian corn is not ground but generally eaten in an unripe state. 241

Ironwork.—They do not smelt iron, neither do they forge their hoes, which are all imported from Samia. They however forge spears, knives, bill hooks, axes, etc., from Samia iron. Among the Gemi tribe only people belonging to a clan called Uvino forge iron; the smiths are called Yothet-th. A rough kind of salt is made from the ashes of reeds and grass, and salt is also imported from Kisingiri. 325 439 258

Death customs.—When a person dies the body is immediately taken out of the house. Upon the death of a woman the brothers-in-law of the deceased dig the grave in the verandah of the house of the deceased; the corpse is buried on its left side with the hand under the head; the body is doubled up. A man, on the contrary, is buried on his right side with the hand under the head. In the case of a woman her relations and friends come and wail; her husband presents each clan that attends with a goat, the mourners stay three days. 764

The hut in which a person has died is used for a month; the neighbours then meet and drink *tembo*, and the house is broken down. Upon the death of a man his brother digs his grave; if the first wife he married is still alive he is buried in her house; if she is dead the man is buried in the verandah of the hut in which he died. [768]

Men only wail for one day, after that only women wail; the women wail for the whole of the first three days; after that the women of the village wail at dawn for fifteen days. 765

Signs of mourning.—Women wear a string of banana fibre round the forehead, they also wear a tail of white strings for about a month; the tail usually

11: Hartmann M-5 (ca. 1920) 1928 FL11 Luo FL11

with their buffalo-hide-shields and spears singing all the time. Meanwhile the heads of all the people of deceased's kraal except his wives are being shaven clean, whilst for this purpose they, in turn, are seated on a log of a thorn-tree, which is put across the main path leading to the village.

On the third day a billy-goat is killed and the meat is cooked and eaten by the women and girls of the kraal only, and an old woman gets the skin of the goat as a new skirt.

On the 4th day the relations go to the grave again and sweep it *(yweyo liel)* with a special kind of grass, putting some earth of the grave in an old basket. This is put in the middle of the path leading to the village, together with the log of wood (orindo) which deceased used to rest his head on when sleeping Nobody will afterwards touch these 2 articles; they are left there in the middle of the path. People will in future go past them, making a curve round them. — This explains why one very seldom finds a straight path leading to a kraal. — The hoe, which was used in digging the grave, is given to an old woman of an other part of the district, but the hoe handle is thrown away. Then all the relations living away from the kraal, and all the neighbours go home.

When they have gone, the stick on top of the deceased hut, and those on the huts of all his women are broken by the grandchild of deceased or by some other small boy. This is a sign to anybody that the occupants of those huts are mourning.

After about two months the wives of deceased go to the village of their parents where they stay for two days, and a young bull is killed for them in honour of deceased. Before the wives have been home, they are not allowed to sleep anywhere but in the deceased husband's village, except under extraordinary circumstances, e. g. if a woman is not able to cross a river on the way home; in such cases she may sleep in another village, but only in the hut of an old woman. If she would break this rule, then the woman in whose hut she slept would not bring forth any children.

Six months later beer is brewn for all the relations and neighbours, who come for the occasion. That day the grave is smeared with mud *(mwono liel)* and the women get their heads shaven for the first time since the death of their husband. Now also all the wives of deceased are disposed of; they go to either the brothers or the cousins of their former husband. The time of mourning is finished and the sticks are replaced on top of the huts by the same boy who broke them off. That night however the women sleep on the bare ground. That day the women wear new white tassels on their backs. These tassels are made as usual from the twisted marrow of papyrus stalks or of sisal-fibre. For since the death of their husband they have left off their ordinary tassel, which they replaced by a coarse untwisted one, made of the fibrous bark of the wild fig-tree.

Then new huts are built for the women, if their new husbands live in another village, and when these are ready their former huts are broken down. If their new husbands live in the same kraal they keep their own huts, except if deceased was buried inside his hut. In this case a new hut is built and the old one is allowed to collapse over the grave. If deceased was buried in a little hut built over grave, then this hut is left till it tumbles down by itself. When later on somebody gets

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

101 174 inhabited Northern Unyoro (where a fragment of them remains), and that the Bahima and their Bantu subjects drove this branch of the Nilotic people across the Albert Nile to the north-west (where they remain as the Aluru) and into Busoga (across the Victoria Nile) on the south-east. From Busoga they appear to have been driven on by the Bantu right through the Kavirondo country until they finally settled and throve round the shores of Kavirondo Bay, where they at present bear the name of Ja-luo or Nyifwa. It is a remarkable fact that the Ja-luo to this day are

[501]

427. A RAFT MADE OF PAPYRUS BUNDLES, WHITE NILE

called by their Bantu neighbours "Abanyoro," which would indicate that this theory of their origin is correct.

361 [178] [342] 513 882 The Ja-luo reside in fixed villages of from ten to fifty huts, which are surrounded by hedges of aloe and euphorbia. Formerly they built mud or stone walls round their settlements in imitation of the Bantu Kavirondo to the north. But this is a custom which has now died out. The houses are similar in appearance to those of the Bantu tribes around them, as is the arrangement about the two fireplaces. Young unmarried girls usually sleep together in one large hut under the care of an old woman. The young men and boys of the village also sleep by themselves, generally

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

near the entrance to the village, so that they can watch over any attempt to steal cattle. The hut which is directly opposite the gate of the village is usually that of the principal wife of the village head-man. There is much the same superstition as among the Bantu Kavirondo about shutting the door of a house behind a person who has just left it. [!]

Unmarried men go naked. Married men who have children wear a

498. HUSBAND AND WIFE, JA-LUI

small piece of goat skin, which, though quite inadequate for purposes of decency, is, nevertheless, a very important thing in etiquette; for a married man with a child must on no account call on his mother-in-law without wearing this piece of goat skin. To call on her in a state of absolute nudity would be regarded as a serious insult, only to be atoned for by the payment of goats. Even if under the new dispensation a man

[!] [i.e.] A very bad omen; more the Bantu equivalent to divorce if it occurs between husband and wife. (cw p. 752-not processed). -Analyst]

17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11

the herds and, by emulation of the age group next above them, slowly acquiring proficiency in the typical adult male pursuits, while the girls are drawn into the domestic tasks of the elementary family, food preparation and cooking, fetching water, and minding babies.

The young boys of a play group sleep together in the goat hut of a homestead when they no longer share their mother's hut at night. The girls sleep together in the hut of some widow of the group who is past childbearing age. This is the most important institution for the transmission of female culture. Girls only leave it at marriage, and till that time they are continuously trained in the adult roles expected of them. Boys at puberty build themselves bachelor huts (Dholuo *simba*) in which they sleep and where they also entertain their girl friends. A group of young men makes a formal assignation with a group of nubile girls from a segment of another maximal lineage into which marriage is possible, and visits and entertainments are held to and from the one lineage territory to the other. The two groups pair off with one another into sex partnerships which last till the groups break up and reform. A youth graduates out of this company of *simba* age-mates at marriage.

Authority over children rests jointly with the parents. That of the mother is likely to be the most effective in the early years, and she always holds a strong sanction in her manipulation and control of the food-supply. The father is ultimately responsible for the order of the family, and his discipline is stronger than the mother's as the children grow older. There is a relation of friendly intimacy between alternate generations. Children are on easy terms with their grandparents and will certainly use the latters' households as an escape from home discipline or as a more generous source of food if need or opportunity arises. Children are at no period encouraged to live away from home with other relatives, but parents allow them to circulate freely among a number of homesteads wherever they find the best welcome and the most plentiful food, among families which are usually both neighbours and close agnatic relatives. Brother and sister have no material reasons for conflict and there is a strong and lasting bond of affection and reliance between them, institutionalized in the symbolism of a number of ritual occasions, and linked to their important later relation to one another's children as mother's brother (*nera*) and father's sister (*waya*). Apart from parents, these are the only two consanguine relatives of the first ascending generation who are picked out by special kinship terms. The newly married woman is under the authority of her mother-in-law, and a man's relation to his wife's parents is marked by deep respect and avoidances. Ritual practices as well as personal attitudes emphasize the importance of fertility and virility,[1] and the value attached by a man to a numerous offspring and the ability of his wives to provide it. The Luo are aware of the male and female parts in procreation, but say that 'the woman's blood goes for nothing'. This seems a necessary inference from the nature of lineage organization rather than vice versa, for they would not argue that there is any tendency for children to resemble the father rather than the mother, nor do they permit marriage with close consanguine kin though of an unrelated lineage. It is

[1] e.g. the special rites which have to be carried out for a nubile girl dying unmarried, a wife dying without children, a widow dying before remarriage, a man dying when one of his wives is still childless, or a man dying before he has experienced sexual intercourse, the latter being treated similarly to a barren woman.

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11

the babies. With the exception of a few children in progressive households, both pagan and Christian children go without clothes; and even when they have them their provision is meagre. There is, however, a tendency for Christian children to be better clothed than those in pagan families, and the latter continue to walk naked for a much longer time.

Bedding is scanty. Dried hides, mats, and old clothes are used, the child's bedding and the mother's being usually the same. Very rarely does the mother sleep apart from her child, and only a few modern parents form an exception in constructing small beds for their children. In the daytime, when asleep, they are generally laid in some shady place beside the house, or on hides, old rags, or mats. Those who have beds may use them, but the majority of children are placed in the open where dust not infrequently blows into their mouths.

Mental and Physical Development

According to the mothers interviewed, the earliest signs of mental and physical development in babies are smiling and lifting of the arms, actions which take place after the second month. This early smile may not be an expression of pleasure but merely an imitation of the mother, who begins to tickle her baby while smiling herself in order to induce it to smile. This induced smile is more noticeable after the third month.

During the fourth month, the child generally plays alone wherever it is put down, provided that it has no serious illness. By the fifth month the senses of hearing and seeing have so far developed that when it hears a noise, the child listens and looks in the right direction.

The period of sitting the child up begins during the sixth month, although trials are made early in the fifth month, while in the course of the seventh month, with

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11

tional society had a more deliberate or conscious sex education than they receive in modern times. Instruction on the nature of sexual relationship was formerly given by an old woman of the village, whose hut served as a communal sleeping place for the girls. This old woman was one who must have stopped giving birth to children. She was either a grandmother or an elder wife in a polygamous homestead. The communal sleeping places are still a feature of the girls' environment, but many of the modern huts have no experienced woman in them; hence the girls have lost their former source of instruction on both the marital and the following day-to-day relationships.

The change from the traditional type of sex education has forced girls approaching marriage to seek information elsewhere. At present they usually make enquiries of experienced married women living in their neighbourhood. Beyond a few cautious warnings, mothers are rarely known to take part in the sex education of their daughters while fathers are completely detached from this field of enquiry.

Sex activities in the communal sleeping places. Talks on sex are not the only activities engaged in by adolescent girls in their sleeping places. In some areas they also receive nocturnal visits from young men who have failed to find suitable opportunities to meet them during the day. This is not a widely spread practice, however, which may be due partly to the strict morality imposed by Christian moral conventions.

Sometimes the girls themselves make arrangements to welcome these visitors by night, remaining awake in order to open the door for the men with whom they have made the appointment. Sometimes this form of visit is also carried out by young men without the girls' consent, but if they are discovered, a great outcry is

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11

this attitude that unmarried girls, as they grow older, are often forced to marry in the end by taking advantage of the institution of polygamy, which acts as a final method of absorption. Although she may live to an advanced age, a single girl is continually tormented by the fact that society does not approve of unmarried girls.

Restrictions. Traditionally, a mature girl is not allowed to enter her father's or her mother's sleeping place, especially if the mother is still giving birth to children. This restriction, although generally ignored by Christians, applies also to the wives of her uncles. Those who are her parents or parents by marriage do not go where a girl receives her male visitors. By custom this hut was built beyond view of the parents' huts and served as a sleeping place for boys. It is considered that a girl who has commenced associating with men should not enter her mother's or father's hut because she would interfere with their powers of reproduction.

Relationship with brothers. The fear of incest has led to the practice of keeping young women's activities as separate as possible from those of their brothers, but free association and conversation concerning their mutual interests generally takes place, since brothers and sisters retain an interest in each others' love affairs. From his sisters, a young man may be informed of things he wishes to know about his girl friend.

Pre-marital pregnancy. Cases of pre-marital pregnancy were very rare in the past, according to most of my informants. But this rarity was not due to the fact that sexual relationships were prohibited. Pregnancy among mature girls was apparently not infrequent from any strict moral code, but from the conscious effort of the girls themselves to guard against it. Because much importance was attached to virginity, it was a matter of personal pride and was carefully guarded. It was a great honour and a